



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE HEDONISM OF DISILLUSIONMENT IN
THE YOUNGER GENERATION.

RAYNA RAPHAELSON.

I HAVE been attending a philosophy seminar, where twelve of us have been considering various aspects of modern ethical theory. To an inquiry as to why more attention was not given to Hedonism, answer was made that hedonism as a philosophic theory has had few advocates in recent days. Idealist, Realist, and Pragmatist have with one accord agreed that hedonism is logically, psychologically, and ethically fallacious.

Yet, as I listened, the insistent query kept rising in my mind, "Then why is there so much hedonism in literature and in life?" For whatever may be true as to philosophic theory, no one who knows what the younger generation at least is thinking and reading and doing will so easily be assured that hedonism has entirely disappeared from earth. It may have no excuse for tarrying after it has been so thoroughly done to death by philosophers, but whether due to the fact that it has not yet learned of its demise or to some more plausible ground, the fact is that it is still here.

Hedonism at times is a surface symptom of an extremely insidious and serious social disease. It is the reaction of a particular sort of temperament to the disillusionment that comes from a realization of social disintegration. And it is because social disintegration is so fatal a disease that hedonism is deserving of more than the casual dismissal it usually receives at the hands of the modern philosopher. For to tell a dangerously ill community that its disease is irrational and to let it go at that is on a par with curing delirium by arguing with the delirious victim about the foolishness of fever. Furthermore, this philosophic indifference seems particularly criminal just at this time, when we are in the grip of a disillusionment that is, very probably, the most severe the world has ever seen.

I am not going to write about hedonism as a philosophic system. I am interested in it only in its relationship to widespread moral anarchy and in its inevitability and its insidiousness. Neither shall I concern myself with the familiar hedonistic fallacies—with the logical, psychological and anthropological difficulties. I know that hedonism can be defeated on any of these grounds. My point is that, in spite of its fallacious logic, in spite of its faulty psychology and its doubtful anthropological assumptions, hedonism is worthy of consideration. For it is an undeniable fact that the attitude persists in the minds of many people to-day—and the presence of this attitude in any community raises social questions that are both fundamentally ethical and of the greatest practical importance.

My candle burns at both ends
It will not last the night.
But ah my foes, and oh my friends,
It gives a lovely light.

That's hedonism—in its only consistent and unequivocal form, and, therefore, the only hedonism that is worthy of the name. It is the attitude of the Rubaiyat and of Aristippus, and, with some tempering, of Epicurus—the attitude also of Boccaccio and Rabelais and Byron and Baudelaire and Remy de Gourmont and Stendhal and George Moore—to mention only a few names.

The word, hedonism, has not always been used with a consistent meaning and so it is necessary at the start to indicate how it will be used in this paper. Hedonism here will mean the mood that is expressed in Edna St. Vincent Millay's flippant little candle poem. The other familiar meaning of the word is that associated with the term, Utilitarianism. But this double use of the word leads to confusion. Aristippus himself, the traditional founder of hedonism, would have been surprised and puzzled to find himself coupled with Jeremy Bentham, and I do not think Epicurus would have permitted John Stuart Mill to remain long in his garden. For Aristippus and Epicurus—like all consistent hedonists—were concerned with their

own states of happiness; Bentham and Mill were worried primarily about the happiness of mankind. The difference is sufficient to justify the use of two words.

But be that as it may, I shall concern myself only with consistent hedonism—and, more especially, with consistent hedonism in only one of its two phases—the hedonism that results from despair. The other type of consistent hedonism—the spontaneously bubbling spirit of youth as expressed either by an individual or by an age—is not so likely to lead to bitter excess. That was the mood of the Renaissance and of the early phases of the Romantic Movement—the mood that said, “Let’s get everything possible out of life because life is a gorgeous opportunity and the world is teeming with promise of happiness and gaiety.” Such hedonism can easily be sublimated into fine art and literature and science. Not so pliable is the despairing hedonism—the hedonism that comes not from youthful enthusiasm but as a reaction to a too gullible idealism. The man who, when he returns from the hospital to find that he has lost his job, that his wife has run off with another man and his dog has died, slams the door of the house and goes out to get wildly drunk, is giving expression to this despairing hedonistic mood. It is about him—and about allied types of hopeless people—that I shall be speaking in this paper.

The despairing man has five alternatives. He can become fighting mad and resolve to remake the world—either grimly and ruthlessly as a setting for himself as would Nietzsche in his *Will to Power*, or with a stubborn hopefulness as a decent place for all mankind to live in, as would many of our modern reformers; or he can shrink from the world, first into himself and then through himself into the realm of mysticism; or he can become a stoical martyr and find the sole meaning of life in showing others the weaknesses in their faiths and beliefs; or he can become a hedonist. This leaves out, of course, the optimist, who still maintains that all’s well with the world or that it can be made so.

Every time in history that things have gone to smash—from the disintegration of the Greek city states to the disaster of the last war—there has followed a period of disillusionment which has become more or less widespread and found expression in one or more of the forms just mentioned.

In Greece, disillusionment came in with the Sophists, was carried on by Aristippus and culminated in Epicurus and the Stoics. When Epicurus was born, the Peloponnesian War had been ended and Pericles dead for sixty years. Greek freedom had become an empty tradition. Local pride could no longer exist. Man was restless and cosmopolitan. Social institutions were unstable; there were corruption, decay and economic disturbances. And men were asking, "How shall a man conduct himself in a world that is going to pieces?"

All through the Roman era, disillusion reigned. Law and order created a great empire but they could not give men confidence in themselves or faith in their world. The Roman Empire was an unnatural phenomenon at best—poorly designed for happiness and contentment. In the first place it was inordinately ambitious; and in the second place its size was all out of proportion with its technology. What roads there were led to Rome—but there were too few of them and the journey took a long time. Also, if you wanted to go to Rome, you had only the roads—no newspapers, no mail service, no railroads, no telegraph.

Roman disillusion found little expression in philosophy, but, for that matter, there was little philosophy of any kind in Rome—only a warmed-over Greek philosophy that had lost its content and its spirit. However, in the everyday life of Rome there was disillusion and unrestraint enough, and in the literature of the time we have Horace and Lucretius, who offer in their mild, almost calculatedly moderate epicureanism a criticism of a society more unrestrained than these two writers thought wise. It was an age of war and uncertainty, and the disintegrating religious and social structure made people sceptical, sophisticated

and hysterical. It was this state of affairs that finally gave rise to the great Christian church organization.

Christianity became a world power not so much because of its truth as because it answered a need. Life on this earth was wretched, but the church pointed to a happy life beyond the grave, and there was a gradual lessening of tension as hedonistic Rome ceased to struggle and succumbed gratefully to the mystical power and practical control of the Christian church. It is not necessary in this paper to treat of this period which Sir Gilbert Murray aptly calls the Age of the Loss of Nerve, except to point out that it, too, resulted from a mood of disillusionment and despair.

Europe did not wake up until the Renaissance, when the world was again split up into smaller units and it was possible for men to feel more at home. The familiar events of this energetic reawakening—the widening world, the new science, the awakening of the individual to the realization of long dormant powers within himself, the rise of princes, the discovery of new themes for art and literature, the inventions in printing that made possible the rapid spread of new ideas—are coupled in our minds with the healthy curiosity and egoistic individualism of such men as Bacon and Descartes and Galileo, of Macchiavelli, of Leonardo and Boccaccio, and of the adventurous explorers of the new continent to the west.

But this high hopefulness of the Renaissance could not last for long. The first flush of enthusiasm and ambition paled, and, in a calmer mood, Europe was forced to see that the new science and the new worlds could not fulfil their promise as quickly as had been expected. The world again succumbed to disillusion. In England there was the philosophy of Hobbes and his followers and on the continent there was the Enlightenment. The keynote of both is individualism—but it is a dogged and determined individualism entirely unlike the joyful enthusiasm of the Renaissance.

This period of cold critical analysis was broken by the industrial revolution and the rise of democracy. These

brought a new period of hope into the world. Democracy and equality meant a new hopefulness for society, and romanticism, for a brief while, succeeded in giving back hopefulness to the individual who for one short hour revelled in a surprised joy in his own emotions—and enjoyed a freedom of expression which had been stifled by the cold analysis of the Enlightenment. But this romanticism could not live long. The materialism of the new world killed it—or else it succumbed to its own logic and ended in melancholy and satiety.

Long after the romantic poets had become silent, the faith of the more active politicians and economists lived on. It is this faith that has supplied us with our optimistic catchwords right up to the present day. Democracy and industry developed and spread. They reorganized most of the world, gave us cities and legislatures and factories and working classes, and remolded our minds to the understanding of an entirely new system of values. They created a world smug in its faith in democracy and economic growth, and secure in an unquestioning belief in its own power, which it had substituted for an implicit belief in the power and indulgent favoritism of an Almighty God.

But in 1914 the industrial revolution, the democratic movement, modern science and the transfer of individualism as an ideal from the individual himself to national and racial groups culminated in a world war which caught us on the crest of a wave of self-confidence and conceit. We began to sink. Some people think we reached the depths in 1917 and have since been slowly rising. Others fail to detect any rise. And these are the disillusioned people of the present day. There are thousands of them.

When these people become articulate they tell us that our world is being attacked by the same disease of disintegration that invaded Greece after the age of Pericles. Religion has been overthrown by modern science and economics; God's hand no longer points our way. Even economic activity—the great god before the war—has

nothing divine about it any more. And the war itself and analytical, dispassionate sex novels have done strange things to men and women and to family and community life.

There are hedonists among these disillusioned people—and also stoics and sceptics, and a veritable flood of mystics of one sort and another. It is the hedonists who have recently been indulging themselves in a competitive orgy of extravagance. Just at the present moment, this riot of spending seems to have been partially abandoned—of necessity; but these hedonists still flood our cabarets and dance halls and create bizarre studios and eating places all along the little side streets of American cities. They follow their own sweet individual will in art and literature and life—and scores of them are persistent in their open and blatant defiance of prohibition.

This new age has received much condemnation, but also some vigorous support and justification. One of the most stirring defences of the so-called “younger generation” was made in an article entitled “*These wild young people,*” by *One of Them*, which was written by John F. Carter, Jr., for the *Atlantic Monthly*. Mr. Carter is not crushed by the situation. He is a militant stoic and somewhat of a hedonist. He is impatient of restraint and tackles the job of reconstruction with a confessed lack of hopefulness but with great vigor, and he pays respects to none of the traditional gods.

Mr. Carter talks about the things that have made these young people wild. “My generation is disillusioned,” he says, “and, I think, to a certain extent brutalized. We have in our unregenerate youth learned the practicality and cynicism that is safe only in unregenerate old age. We have been forced to become realists overnight. We have seen man at his lowest, woman at her lightest, in the terrible moral chaos of Europe. We have been forced to question, and, in many cases, to discard the religion of our fathers. We have seen hideous peculation, greed, anger, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness, unmasked and rampant

and unashamed. We have been forced to live in an atmosphere of 'to-morrow we die,' and so, naturally, we drank and were merry. We have seen entire social systems overthrown and our own called in question. In short, we have seen the inherent beastliness of the human race revealed in an infernal apocalypse."

However, although Mr. Carter is defiant of criticism and impatient of restraint, he is not a slacker when it comes to the work of reconstruction. "Oh! I know we are a pretty bad lot, but has not that been true of every preceding generation? At least we have the courage to act accordingly. We drink when we can and what we can, we gamble and are extravagant—but we work, and that's about all that we can be expected to do. . . . The Grundy's shake their heads. . . . They'll make us good. Prohibition is put through to stop our drinking and hasn't stopped it. Bryan has plans to curtail our philanderings but he won't do any good. A Draconian code is being hastily formulated at Washington and elsewhere to prevent us from, by any chance, making any alteration in this present divinely constituted arrangement of things. . . . They won't do any good. They can shackle us down, and still expect us to repair their blunders if they wish. But we shall not trouble ourselves very much about them any more. Why should we? What have they done? They have made us work as they never had to work in all their padded lives—but we'll have our cake and ale for a' that."

There you have the younger generation when it is courageously hedonistic and militant. Often it is neither, and then it is more insidious.

These young people are indeed disillusioned. With true sceptical vigor they scoff at governments and at all the democratic ideals that were used so facilely by politicians and statesmen during the war; they listen unmoved and with tongue in cheek to patriotic speeches and to the blare of bands, and they invariably make significant reservations to themselves about the idea of God. Add to these attitudes an easy if surface familiarity with a new kind of psychology

that traces our actions to not the most pleasant of motives and you have the soil in which many of the minds of our modern youths are taking root.

The first, most obvious objection that will be made to this view of our young people will be that there are, after all, not so very many of these rebels, but that they talk so loud that the millions of steady conservatives can no longer be heard. And this may be true; yet college campuses seem to belie this contention. All the students may not be out of bounds, but the increasingly difficult problems of deans of men and deans of women seem to indicate that at least the number is growing.

It will be said, too, that these wild young people are the victims of an after-the-war psychology; and, as a matter of fact, this is probably true. Yet we cannot go on from that to say that, therefore, this lawlessness and unrestraint among our youth is a passing phenomenon. Once before in history disillusionment held the world in its grip for almost a dozen centuries; it may do so again. All we can know to-day is that here are these disillusioned people,—also incidentally that they are not entirely confined to the younger generation,—that their number seems to increase and their questions continue to confront us and to present an unanswered and seemingly unanswerable challenge.

We get many glimpses of the moods of these people from contemporary literature. There are sceptics—and, as might be expected, these are often older men—men who had vision enough to see what would happen long before it did happen and so, long ago, noted the flimsiness of many of our pretensions. Notably among our older sceptics are Anatole France and James Branch Cabell, both of whom are becoming increasingly popular among young people.

Anatole France mixes his scepticism with a sober hedonism. Cabell's scepticism is so fraught with romanticism and medievalism that at times he seems almost a mystic.

France in *The Garden of Epicurus* says, "All we know is this; there is no more repose in the spaces of the sky than on

earth, and the same law of strife and struggle governs the infinitude of the cosmic universe." And this, "What better can we do than build sand castles at ten years old and form collections at sixty. Nothing will remain in any case of all our work, and the love of old books is not more foolish than any other love." And this, "In life we must make all due allowance for chance. Chance, in the last resort, is God." And this, "There is nothing else for us to do in this world but resign ourselves to circumstance. But the nobler natures know how to give resignation the fine name of content."

Cabell, also, finds the world a hopeless place, but he, also, refuses to be made tragic by its hopelessness. "A comedy of woman-worship," "A comedy of purse-strings," "A comedy of appearances," "A comedy of limitations," "A comedy of evasions," "A comedy of justice,"—these are the subtitles to some of his books. But this is not comedy of the Charley Chaplin variety. There is nothing really funny about his books. They leave one with the feeling of having experienced great beauty and great futility. Everything is illusory—except, indeed, romance, in which Cabell finds his only solace. And even of romance he at times expresses doubt. He is a strange combination of gently embittered disillusion and vaguely smiling trust in the efficacy of dreams. He wants to think of the world not as it is but as it ought to be; and yet all the time he refuses to be deluded; he always remembers that the romance he creates is only a dream—a dream, indeed, which is consciously designed "to free us from this unsatisfying life that is calendared by fiscal years, and to contrive a less disastrous elusion of our own personalities than many seek dispersedly in drink and drugs and lust and fanaticism and sometimes in death."

So we have Cabell—a combination of a scepticism of this life and the hedonism of despair.

Walter Pater and Remy de Gourmont died before the war—but they, also, saw how pathetically futile were the ideals of our modern civilization. Both of them turned to

hedonistic æstheticism, the one with a fine and mellow toleration and the other with a flippant, almost supercilious scepticism. It is Remy de Gourmont who says, "The ill are always optimistic; perhaps optimism itself is an illness." And, "Believe in nothing; not even the trade you follow, not even the hand you caress, the eyes in which you are mirrored, not even yourself—above all, not in yourself."

As to the immediate present, our literature is still very chaotic and confused, but, nevertheless, the war has brought out several significant things. It has stimulated a new freedom of form in literature, painting, sculpture and music. There has been a flood of free verse, much of it difficult to understand, but all of it attempting, either naturally or affectedly, to express unfettered individuality. We have also had a flood of love lyrics, many of them reflecting disillusion in their new note either of desperate abandon or of weariness. These lyrics seem to be replacing the vigorous propaganda thought-poems of the pre-war and early war period. And then there is some frank hedonism and despair.

We have already cited the candle burning at both ends from Edna St. Vincent Millay, who early abandoned the wistful hopefulness of her first book, *Renascence*, for the slightly humorous but infinitely sad disillusionment of her later books, *A Few Figs from Thistles* and *Second April*. Sometimes her mood verges on despair. She shifts from flickering outbursts of adventurousness to a doubting of what will be found at the end of the road—from

My heart is warm with the friends I make
And better friends I'll not be knowing.
Yet there isn't a train I wouldn't take
No matter where it's going.

to

There was a road ran past our house
Too lovely to explore,
I asked my mother once; she said
That if you followed where it led
It brought you to the milk-man's door.
That's why I have not traveled more.

Edna St. Vincent Millay is probably the most popular of our younger poets. If she has a rival it is Rupert Brooke, another hedonist, but one who did not live long enough for his healthy hedonism, which reminds one of the earlier Millay poems, to shift to pessimism. He died at the height of the war while idealism was still in the air. But there are enough hints in his poetry—in *When Love Has Turned to Kindliness* for instance, and in his insidious *Helen and Menelaus*, to indicate that the gay buoyant earthiness of *The Great Lover* would have shifted at the end of the war to something less hopeful and less strenuous. I have heard some people say they are glad he did not live.

Scores of other poets are sprinkling their inevitable love lyrics with various kinds of pessimism. Sassoon writes—

Do they matter, those dreams from the pit?
We can drink and forget and be glad.

Conrad Aiken faces a new day with calm resignation but with little hope.

It is morning, Senlin says, and in the morning
When the light drips through the shutters like the dew,
I arise, I face the sunrise,
And do the things my fathers learned to do.
Stars in the purple dusk above the rooftops
Pale in a saffron mist and seem to die,
And I myself on a swiftly tilting planet
Stand before my glass and tie my tie.

In the evening Senlin sings another song, of which this is the last refrain—

And the star I laugh on tilts through heaven;
And the heavens are dark and steep.
I will forget these things once more
In the silence of sleep.

There is disillusion in Alfred Kreymbourg's *Idealists*:

Brother tree: Why do you reach and reach?
Do you dream some day to touch the sky?
Brother stream: Why do you run and run?
Do you dream some day to fill the sea?
Brother Bird: Why do you sing and sing?
Do you dream—
Young Man: Why do you talk and talk and talk?

Arthur Davison Ficke writes—

I am weary of being bitter and weary of being wise,
And the armour and the mask of these fall from me after long.
I would go where the islands sleep, or where the sea dawns rise
And lose my bitter wisdom in the wisdom of a song.

and even Ezra Pound—

Sing we for love and idleness
Naught else is worth the having.

While a number of our lyric poets are turning away from this western world and are seeking solace in the beauty of ancient Chinese, Japanese and Indian poetry.

An interesting poet is Louis Untermeyer. Four or five years ago he was in high hope and wrote a book called *Challenge*. He was very brave then, even though the task of remolding the world seemed rather appalling—

And we shall cry out till the wind
Roars in their ears the thing to come.
Yea, though they make us deaf and blind,
Nothing will keep us dumb.

But his post-war book, *The New Adam*, shouts no challenge. It is a collection of love lyrics, dealing often with the disillusion of love and often frankly sensual. Here is one, written in a cemetery—

Life is all that matters
Love is all that saves.
Then I heard the dead men
Chuckling in their graves.

For once, the comment on the jacket of a book is significant. The publisher recognizes the forces that are making the poet of to-day. "Caught in the eternal struggle of the flesh, this new Adam is the child of a complex and analytical age, a being who realizes his inability to dwell in Paradise, and yet longs continually to regain an impossible Eden."

So much for the poets. Of course, these few quotations do not give any adequate idea of the whole of the poetry of any of these writers. There is a great deal of poetry being written by them and others that does not strike the key

of pessimism. Nevertheless, the minor note and the note of scepticism recurs again and again.

Among the prose writers, there has been an even more significant development. First there were the extreme war horror stories, the result of a violent aversion to brutality—such books as Barbusse's *Under Fire* and Latzko's *Men in War*. This intense mood was, of course, too extreme to last for long.

But since the days of the war, books of a new type have literally poured in on us. With the self-revealing frankness of expression which psycho-analysis and the war developed, we are still having a flood of realistic psycho-analytical, slightly disguised autobiographical novels. Everybody started out to tell the truth about himself and the world, and much of it has not been very pleasant truth. In America there have been *Moon Calf*, *Briary Bush*, *Erik Dorn*, *This Side of Paradise*, *Poor White*, *Main Street*, *Miss Lulu Bett*—and many others which have not attracted such universal attention. From England, we get *Potterism*, *Dangerous Ages*, and *Debatable Ground*. And from Germany there has come Wasserman's *Great Illusion*—in two volumes.

These are to-day our "best sellers." They have very little in common with the best sellers of the early years of the century or with the social problem novel which always had a vigorous solution in the end, novels of the type of Ernest Poole's *Harbor*.

Yet in spite of their gloominess and pessimism and sordidness, these recent books leave the impression of being more significant than any books we have had in a long time. They are honest. They give expression to sincere emotion and voice the insistent questions which are making life an uncertain performance for many people of the twentieth century. We are reminded of the sordid naturalism of Artsibachev's *Sanine* which came as a reaction to the fiasco of the Russian Revolution of 1905—and of the weary rebellion and pessimism of Andreyev.

Side by side with these unabashed novelists is the group

of the so-called young radical intellectuals who have been flooding our magazines and newspapers with destructive criticism. A group of them have gotten together recently and put out a book which they call, *Civilization in the United States*. The gist of this examination of civilization seems to be that there isn't any. These men have been unceasingly berated by the more conservative critics on the ground that they are purely destructive, that they howl inconsistently but with great vigor for the limitation of individualism in order to make room for socialism, and for the destruction of society in order to make way for the individual; and because they indulge in a general thumping of the table in behalf of the freeing from convention of everything that has traditional value—government, industry, war, sex, God. A recent critic has said of this group that the trouble with them is that, first, they are not gentlemen and, second, they do not use their brains.

Now this may be so. Yet little seems to be gained by calling these young men boors; and terming them half-baked will not serve to dismiss them. There are too many of them. They are giving expression to a mood that is becoming more widespread every day, and the ridicule of the critic will do no more than the logic of the philosopher to silence the mood of the genuinely disillusioned man when he has a disillusioned audience that will listen.

The proof that these poets and novelists and belligerent critics are not merely lone voices as were the radicals before the war is found in the fact that their books are selling in a way that similar books never sold before. Almost any writer of radical critical comment, any new poet, any new realistic novelist can find an audience; and one clue to the amazing sale of H. G. Wells's *Outline of History* is, I think, the fact that people are worrying to-day about the perplexing problem of the purpose of life—and are in search of understanding.

Even so, it will be said, there is no reason for viewing this situation with alarm. Even granting that the world these pessimists see is the true world, things have gone to smash

before and the world has recovered; it will recover again. And to strengthen this, we can point to the great achievements of the last few centuries which give promise for the future—our workable science, our workable psychology; our beginnings of a more adequate understanding of the history in back of us and the society around us. But, the pessimist answers us, these are not unmixed goods. Our greater knowledge also brings us a clearer understanding of our own limitations and the limitations of our world. And he will go on to point out that there never before has been an age just like this one—just because we do know so much; we have discovered all the geographic world there is; we are beginning to have a suspicion that science has its limits, and we have taken much of the mystery out of the heavens.

And this pessimist—who, by the way, usually terms himself a realist—will then go on to say that in the days of Epicurus, if a God had looked down from the heavens, he would have seen hope. The civilized world had not yet been rounded out—just a few tribes huddled around the Mediterranean—and beyond, thousands of miles of untapped world. For, even though the men of Greece did not fulfil the hope of that outer world, there it was and its very existence constituted a promise for the future.

So, too, in Rome. Although Rome did not permanently conquer Europe, it could set out to explore the world beyond the grave—and dreams of paradise could prove a solace for many, many years. Then, when in the course of time, this spiritual adventure lost its zest, there was again that world to be explored. And people brought their eyes down from the heavens and were soon launched on voyages of hopeful discovery—geographic, scientific, artistic.

But to-day, the pessimist goes on, the world beyond the grave which was discovered by the scholastics and the world this side of the grave which was found by the treasure seekers of the Renaissance seem to many people to be on the verge of exhaustion. We may still find a comfort of a sort in religion, but there is not in our new religion which spells Society with a capital letter and god with a small one,

the personal promise that proved a solace in the Middle Ages. And although we may still enjoy the art and use the science discovered by the men of the Renaissance, we no longer have their faith that wonders will be accomplished.

It is this feeling of having reached the end of the rope that has gripped the world to-day. We've seen all there is. There isn't any more. We look about us. Our science may still improve industry, but many people detect danger in that. Around the world in eighty days has no longer the power to thrill. We do it now in a month. The mystery of foreign places is being dispelled. Mankind, we have come to see, is much the same the world over and foreign peoples seem more prone to ape our economic efficiency with its correlated social and human problems than to embrace the outworn theology which we offer them. And, finally, there is the war disillusionment, the doubting of motives and a new attitude toward the individual, who no longer has a soul but a mind,—the limits of which are being fatally proved by relentless mental tests—and a heart which is rapidly becoming a matter of Freudian complexes.

What to do in such a world? This is the same problem which Epicurus faced in Greece over two thousand years ago—the same question for which Marcus Aurelius sought an answer—and St. Augustine and Voltaire and Hobbes.

It may be said that this is, after all, not precisely a philosopher's business. A philosopher's concern may be primarily with theory and it may not be part of his task so to phrase and interpret his theory that it can be used by unphilosophic men in solving their problems. And the fact does remain that the contemporary philosopher has little to say that can be of direct use to the contemporary pessimist.

To take the two extremes, the pragmatist and the idealist—the pragmatist, with his ideal of controlling this world and building solidly on the results of science, would be said by the disillusioned man to be expressing either the discredited

spirit of the past war, or the spirit of frenzied economic activity, or the blind hopefulness of a stubborn optimism that refuses to recognize that there is nothing particularly fine or hopeful about people or society or God. And sometimes, this sceptical pessimist wonders if the pragmatist is any other than a stoic with a feverish program of reform which serves to keep him from thought.

The alternative answer is that of the idealist who still hopes to save from the pessimist's wreck some of the old significant structures—friendship, art, virtue, God. But the last two of these seem to the disillusioned man to have little ground to stand on, and as for the first two, he may recognize them as goods—but not in the way of the idealist—as a part of a hierarchy of goods which can be depended upon to save the world. He sees them rather as the only possible goods—and at that not ultimately satisfactory—left dimly shining amidst a rubbish heap of outworn hypocrisies.

But what *can* the philosopher do, then? Just this—he can face the fact that this disillusioned attitude may continue to spread until it becomes a factor in the determination of life values for all of us. Of course, this is not an immediate possibility—but neither is it inconceivable. And, it seems to me, the philosopher should try to have some answer ready. He should not continue to ignore the hedonist and the pessimist or to pursue the ridiculous attempt of defeating them by pointing out their faulty logic and psychology.

As I see it, it should not be considered the whole of the philosopher's task to interpret the life that has gone by: he should keep ahead of life and see the future if he can—or, at the very least, he should face the immediate problems that surround him. To-day he seems blind to the world he is living in—a world that is being shaped more and more by these pessimists who do not understand his language—who hate abstractions and are suspicious of familiar phrases, who have abandoned the old religion and seem to feel no insistent need for a new one, who see in ethical standards

nothing binding, only a conventional expression of social customs which might easily be different and which, moreover, these pessimists propose to make different, who have the frank, analytical, unabashed and unworshipful attitude toward sex and family life which is portrayed in *Debatable Ground*, who, in fact, have no great respect for man, God or devil, and in whose ears the roars of cannons still reverberate and the phrase, love of humanity, sounds as hollow as does love of country or love of God.

It is, I think, up to the philosopher, who purports to be an authority on values, to face this world as it is—and to attempt to save traditional values if he can, or else, if he can't, to create some new ones; and it is up to him to come down out of his world of abstractions or technical pragmatic terms and answer the disillusioned citizen in words that he can understand. This certainly would be an ambitious undertaking. It stumped Socrates and Plato when they were challenged by a similar need in Greece. But at least they tried to face it.

It would be ridiculous, of course, to expect that I, a student in a seminar, should have a solution to offer. I haven't. But, as one of the younger generation, I can insist that the philosophers ought to recognize the needs of this present age—that they should wake up to the fact that for the past seven or eight years or more, there has been more than a hint of moral anarchy in the air which, if it be allowed to develop, has within it the power to shatter many, if not all, of the values that have given meaning to life in the past—to insist, indeed, that in connection with our moral world, the philosopher should face squarely the fact which Delisle Burns recognizes in regard to our political world, that, just as in Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome, we are again at the cross-roads and progress is not inevitable.

RAYNA RAPHAELSON.